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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: FEBRUARY 20, 2009

Summary: U.S. Special Envoy Holbrooke's statement underlining that "those who were involved in the 9/11 incident and the Mumbai attacks, and the people who seized Swat all come from the same roots" dominated headlines in all major newspapers on Friday. His remarks that "U.S. was not sure if the Pakistani military and ISI backed President Zardari's commitment to eradicate terrorist sanctuaries from the NWFP" received front page coverage. Pakistan Foreign Office's rejection of growing international criticism on the Swat peace deal and warning that "speculations would not be helpful" garnered wide coverage. Newspapers highlighted reports that the "Punjab government ordered closure of NATO logistics depot in Attock." Also prominently displayed were reports of "countrywide protests against killing of Swat journalist".

Most newspapers continued to run editorials on the future of the "Peace Deal" in Swat with special reference to the assassination of journalist in the area. The centrist national daily, "The News," (the slain reporter's employer), noted that "there is suspicion that Musa was killed in an attempt to sabotage this deal. But by whom and why? There are no immediate answers." The Peshawar-based Urdu daily, "Mashriq" observed that the "tragic assassination of a local journalist in Swat has posed serious doubts and reservations on the efficacy of the recent peace deal in Swat." The Lahore-based liberal daily, "Daily Times," opined that the "Baitullah Mehsud's Waziristan Taliban fired another warning shot to the Taliban of Swat when they blew up two more girls' schools in Bajaur on Wednesday. This again was ritualistic and symbolic because the girls no longer go to school in Bajaur. Given this atmosphere, it is going to be difficult for Sufi Mohammad to persuade his son-in-law to relent and let peace return to the valley." End Summary.

News Stories

"Holbrooke Says Swat Taliban Same As 9/11 Perpetrators" "The News" (02/20)

"U.S. Special Representative to Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke said on Wednesday those who were involved in the 9/11 incident and the Mumbai attacks, and the people who seized Swat all come from the same roots and all are located in the same area."

"U.S. Throws Doubt On Military's Role In Terror Fight" "Dawn" (02/20)

"The United States was not sure if the Pakistani military and ISI backed President Asif Ali Zardari's commitment to eradicate

terrorist sanctuaries from the NWFP, the U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan said on Thursday. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, in his first media interview said this issue 'will be pursued at very high levels' in U.S.-Pakistan talks scheduled in Washington next week.... Ambassador Holbrooke also linked this week's peace agreement in Swat to the military's reluctance to support President Zardari's anti-terrorism policies and said the U.S. was 'troubled and confused' about this deal."

"FO Rejects World Concern Over Swat Peace Deal" "The News" (02/20)

"Pakistan on Thursday brushed aside as 'speculative' the concerns of the international community on ramifications of the Swat peace deal and cautioned that speculations in the matter would not be helpful. Pakistan attaches immense importance to eliminating militancy and terrorism, Foreign Office spokesperson Abdul Basit categorically stated at the weekly news briefing."

"'Resting Areas' For NATO Supply Trucks Shut In Punjab" "Dawn" (02/20)

"Provincial Law Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan informed the Punjab Assembly on Thursday that two NATO supply facilities, one in Attock and the other in Mianwali, had been closed. The Minister said there was a privately-owned 'resting area' in Attock for trucks carrying NATO supplies to Afghanistan."

"Countrywide Rallies To Protest Reporter's Killing" "The Nation" (02/20)

"Condemning the brutal assassination of Musa Khankhel, a working journalist in Swat, the journalist community along with civil society held protest demonstration across the country on Thursday and asked the government bring the culprits behind this heinous crime to book and provide foolproof security to media persons."

"Terrorists Have Found 'Haven' In Pakistan: Hillary Clinton" "The News" (02/20)

"U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said that the terrorists have found safe haven in Pakistan, a country, which she said is now under greater pressure because of the economic crisis. In an interview to the ABC news, Clinton agreed with Director of the National Intelligence Dennis Blair that the economic crisis poses the greatest threat to the security now and this needs to be fixed urgently."

"Pakistan Serious To Combat Terrorism, Says Scheffer" "The News" (02/20)

"NATO officials have said they are confident that Pakistan's government remains a dedicated partner in the fight against terrorism despite a decision to impose the Islamic law in a strategic north-western territory, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said on Thursday."

"Islamabad Trying To Ensure Border Security: U.S. Gen." "The Nation" (02/20)

"A top U.S. military commander on Wednesday said Pakistan is striving to control the Pak-Afghan border. 'There is a growing recognition, I would say, that is in the mutual interest of both countries (Pakistan and Afghanistan) to improve the border security,' Gen. David McKiernan, told a Pentagon briefing."

"Troika Decides To Keep Army In Swat" "The News" (02/20)

"The troika - President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and Army Chief Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani - on Thursday decided to keep the Army in Swat till complete restoration of peace in the area. According to sources, after reviewing the Swat situation, it was decided to adopt wait and see policy and keep the Army in Swat till complete restoration of peace and writ of the government."

"Swat Deal To Isolate Militants: Qureshi" "The News" (02/20)

"Foreign Minister Mahmood Qureshi said on Thursday that the government's objective by signing the Swat deal was to distinguish

between the peaceful citizens and militants. In an interview to the state-run TV, he said: 'we have isolated militants through this deal.'"

"TNSM In Talks With Swat TTP To End Fighting" "The News" (02/20)

"The leaders of the Tanzim Nifaz Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) held talks with the Swat chapter of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) somewhere in Matta Tehsil of the troubled Swat Valley on Thursday to convince them to lay down their arms after the enforcement of the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation."

"U.S. Asked To Cough Up \$1 Billion Immediately" "The News" (02/20)

"The government has asked the Obama administration to immediately reimburse at least \$1 billion out of \$1.350 billion spent during the last nine months for services Pakistan has provided in the war on terror."

"Another U.S. Writer Endorses Charges Against Musharraf" "The News" (02/20)

"Despite repeated denials by former President Pervez Musharraf, another American writer also accused him of playing a 'double game' with the Americans and the Taliban in the war on terror, claiming that the U.S. had indisputable evidence in this regard. In an interview with 'The News,' Ron Suskind - a seasoned U.S. journalist and author of many books - confirmed that Musharraf was also under the U.S. surveillance, and his phone and activities were monitored, he claimed."

"14 Militants Killed In Bajaur Agency" "The News" (02/20)

"Fourteen militants were killed and several others injured when security forces shelled suspected hideouts of militants in different areas of the restive Bajaur Agency on Thursday."

"Asif Proceeds On China Visit Today" "The News" (02/20)

"During President Asif Ali Zardari's four-day official visit to China which begins Friday (today) three bilateral pacts will be signed, two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) in the agriculture sector and one agreement on Trade, according to diplomatic source."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Death On Duty," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/20)

"There is suspicion that Musa was killed in an attempt to sabotage this deal. But by whom and why? There are no immediate answers.... We need to know who killed the journalist. This discovery may throw light on what is happening in Swat."

"Killing Of a Journalist Following Peace Deal In Swat," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (02/20)

"The tragic assassination of a local journalist in Swat valley has posed serious doubts and reservations on the efficacy of the recent peace deal in Swat."

"Omens Against Peace In Swat...", an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/20)

"The Taliban, who actually rule Swat, have announced a ten-day truce and have made public their reverence for the Sufi; but they could not have liked the Shariah accord in which the charismatic Sufi has given away some of the fundamental positions taken by the Taliban's central leadership. For instance, Baitullah Mehsud's Waziristan Taliban fired another warning shot to the Taliban of Swat when they blew up two more girls' schools in Bajaur on Wednesday. This again was ritualistic and symbolic because the girls no longer go to school in Bajaur. Given this atmosphere, it is going to be difficult for Sufi Muhammad to persuade his son-in-law to relent and

let peace return to the valley."

"Swat Peace," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (02/20)

"Those opposed to peace in Swat are active as evidenced by the killing of a local journalist covering the peace caravan of Sufi Muhammad. He is the fourth journalist killed in Swat.... Some foreign powers are opposing the agreement. There are some elements within the country who consider the peace agreement a bid to give support to the militants."

"Democracy Is Islamic: Maulana Sufi Should Desist From Starting A New Debate," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (02/20)

"In an interview with private TV channel, TNSM chief Sufi Muhammad said that democracy is against Quran and that he considers it as infidelity.... Maulana Sufi and his followers should limit themselves to enforcement of Shariah in Malakand and peace in Swat and should not indulge in debates that could harm their position, jeopardize efforts for peace and create chaos in Pakistan."

"Keep An Eye On Enemies Of Peace," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (02/20)

"Situation is fast moving toward normalization in Swat following the agreement between the Frontier government and TNSM.... Enemies of peace have begun activities to sabotage the agreement by destroying two schools in Bajaur and killing a journalist in Swat.... The parties of the agreement should remain vigilant against those elements that are unhappy with the treaty."

"Swat: Doctrine Of Necessity (In Its Purest Form)," an op-ed by Ayaz Amir in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/20)

"The Swat accord is certainly proving more effective against the Swat Taliban than anything done by the army.... The government should be extra careful not to give the Taliban any excuse to break the accord. If they do so nevertheless, the onus will be upon them to justify the return to arms. So whether Sharia law in the real sense is imposed in Malakand or not, it is in our interest to say that Islamic justice has come. Instead of sowing doubts about the accord, we should put the best face on it. The Americans of course are being stupid and sotto voce are muttering capitulation but for once we should ignore their signals of distress. This is not our war but it is our country and the Americans are not going to save it for us. We have to do this ourselves. Let the presidency and the army, the two key players from our side, resist American bullying and stick to the Swat accord."

"Justice In Swat?," an op-ed by Ayesha Siddiqi in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (02/20)

"The agreement comes in the wake of revelations from the U.S. that American drones fly from Pakistani bases. If true, this would not only mean that the Pakistani government has been economical with the truth, but that the military too was not being entirely honest by publicly questioning Washington's position on directing attacks at Pakistan's territory.... The acceptance of the Swat deal is no different either. One of the reasons that the deal was negotiated and is being sold hard by the present government is because it suits Islamabad, Washington and the Taliban to have a ceasefire. While the Taliban get de facto recognition, Pakistan, NATO and the U.S. forces get some breathing space."

"What The Swat Agreement Means," an op-ed by M.A. Niazi in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/20)

"In Swat, what happens if the so-called Shariah does not deliver the swift justice it should? Will Islam get the blame or the Wali? That is a separate issue which Maulana Sufi Nek Muhammad, whose son-in-law, Maulana Fazlullah, has an FM radio station of his own, will probably not have to answer, but if he does, will probably have

no answer for. But this is a sign that the country is returning to a conservatism that will make the Americans unhappy. Also, it provides an alternative that at present anti-Americanism does not have."

"Implications Of The Swat Deal," an op-ed by Najmuddin A. Shaikh in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/20)

"Sufi Mohammad and Fazlullah do not control all elements involved in the insurgency. If rumors are to be believed, there have been insurgents from Uzbekistan and Punjab that have moved into Swat. It is a sad but almost foregone conclusion that this agreement will be no more effective than the ones concluded in the past, and that while there will be a welcome albeit temporary respite from the daily bloodletting in Swat, the strife will soon resume with the government in an even worse position than it is now."

"Assassination Of Geo TV Reporter," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (02/20)

"Several journalists have been killed, abducted, or tortured in FATA and other tribal areas while performing their duties during last few years. But the assassination of Musa Khan Khel is one of its kind incident as he was covering the peace rally in Swat following the much-projected peace deal. His gory murder also elucidated the growing sense of insecurity among the people of Pakistan."

"In The Line Of Duty," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (02/20)

"The identity of the assassins remains unknown and as such the motive behind the killing is a mystery as well.... If the government cannot guarantee the safety of media persons - in some situation it simply cannot but in other instances it surely can - at least an effort must be made to bring the guilty to book. On this count the performance of successive governments has been a resounding failure."

"Googled!," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/20)

"The presence of bases used by the U.S. within the country is simply unacceptable. Opinion about this is unanimous. The suggestion coming in from the U.S. that the raids be re-cast as 'joint operations' needs to be considered carefully by our decision-makers. This may, for the present, seem to be the only way out. But a crucial prong in this approach must be to persuade people that the war against terrorists is one led and planned by Islamabad; that it is being fought for the sake of the people of Pakistan. This conviction has still to be created and in its absence the U.S. involvement is, naturally, one that arouses a great deal of anger even though the drone attacks have removed a number of high-level targets."

"More Troops For Less War," an editorial in the country's premier business newspaper, "Business Recorder" (cir. 25,000) (02/20)

"The prevalent thinking in some of the coalition quarters that war must be won and democracy and development can wait is too crass a thought to be entertained after having paid in blood for over seven years. Surely President Obama is not militaristic. We would hope that by sending additional troops to Afghanistan he wants to contain war and thus win the battle for Afghan hearts and minds."

"American President's Concern Over Prolonged Afghan War," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (02/20)

"In an interview, President Obama has admitted that he is concerned about the prolonged Afghan war.... President Obama is right in saying that use of force alone cannot end extremism; in fact it could lead to an increase in extremism.... Former President Clinton has warned President Obama that Afghanistan could prove to be another Vietnam if British and Russian policies are adopted. The Iranian President has also warned that President Obama's position could be even worse than President Bush's if the U.S. foreign policy is not changed. The U.S. administration must pay heed to these warnings and keeping in view the changing ground realities bring

about a suitable flexibility in its policy - thus helping the U.S. President."

"Diplomacy, Not War," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (02/20)

"South Asia lives under the pall of nuclear weapons. There is no way back from the use of them and all the military planning and strategizing is useless if political rhetoric and jingoism take over.... An alternative to war, diplomacy, has worked. Mr. Mukherjee's statement should be modified to 'war should never be an option.'"

Patterson